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THE REFORM MOVEMENT IN JUDAISM.

IV¹.THE FRANKFORT SOCIETY OF THE FRIENDS OF
REFORM².

THE Jewish community of Frankfort-on-the-Main had been for centuries one of the foremost in Germany ; it was distinguished for the learned men who had filled the rabbinical position there, for the stirring scenes that had been enacted in its famed "Gasse"³ and for the prominence and wealth of a number of its families. While the city was an imperial fief its Jewish community had been ruled by special legislation (*Judenordnungen*) which the Emperors issued from time to time ; when the sway of the Emperors came to an end in 1806, Frankfort passed under the rule of the Prince Primate of the Rhenish Confederation, Karl von Dahlberg. This ruler published a new order for the government and protection of the Jews which was not much of an improvement on the old *Judenordnungen*, for it withheld from them expressly the right of citizenship. When the Duchy of Frankfort with its own constitution was formed, upon the dissolution of the Rhenish Confederation, the representatives of the Jews induced the Archduke

¹ In connexion with the reference to the Jewish Religious Union of London towards the close of my article in the April (1904) number of the *Quarterly*, mention should have been made of the Hampstead Sabbath Afternoon Services, begun on Feb. 22, 1890, and conducted by the Rev. Morris Joseph with the assistance of a number of other gentlemen. These services continued for three years and were of a reform tendency.

² *Frankfurter Verein der Reformfreunde*.

³ See the author's *Old European Jewries*, 46-81 (Philadelphia, 1894).

Dahlberg to promulgate a special law in consideration of a great sum of money; this law declared that the Jews of Frankfort "with their children and descendants should enjoy civil rights and privileges equally with other citizens." The Jews took the oath of citizenship and it seemed indeed as though the long night of mediaevalism had passed away and the morn of freedom had dawned. But it was a deceptive hope. After the fall of Napoleon a reactionary period set in, the evil effects of which were felt for the time being by the Jews throughout Germany.

The Congress of Vienna, which was convened in 1814 for the purpose of regulating the affairs of the European states after the fall of Napoleon, and which was participated in by the great statesmen of the allied countries, gave some consideration also to the Jewish question; the fourteenth Article of the first draft of the Acts of the Congress, as agreed upon by the representatives of Austria, Prussia, and Hanover, had declared that Jews who performed all the duties of citizens should be accorded all the rights of citizenship, and that wherever the existing laws of a State presented obstacles to the consummation of this programme, those obstacles should be removed as soon as possible. A number of the representatives of the smaller German states protested against this paragraph, but the two great Powers, Austria and Prussia, insisted upon its retention. The free cities, among them Frankfort, which had obtained its autonomy in the meantime, objected particularly to the term "rights of citizenship" (*Bürgerrechte*) and demanded the substitution of the phrase "civil rights" (*Bürgerliche Rechte*). This alteration was made, and in its final form the Article included the further provision that until such a change became an accomplished fact the Jews of the separate states should continue to be governed by the special legislation in force at the time. This action of the Congress gave ground for the hope that the spirit of mediaevalism that still obtained in the conduct of the affairs of the Jews would soon disappear. A violent anti-

Jewish literary campaign ensued, however, in various cities of Germany, which culminated in the turbulent and disgraceful hep-hep outbreaks of the year 1819 in Frankfort and elsewhere¹. A bitter struggle waged between the Senate of Frankfort and the Jews for eight years, from 1816 to 1824, in which latter year the Jews succeeded in obtaining certain rights. The movement for Jewish civil emancipation went bravely forward until it was crowned with success in the revolutionary year 1848 in most of the German states, although it was not until 1864 that the last vestige of civil discrimination against the Jews of Frankfort disappeared.

But the agitation for change was not confined to the political and civil disabilities under which the Jews rested; the dissatisfaction with the *status quo* had invaded the religious province also. In former essays I traced the earliest efforts towards religious reform in Berlin, Hamburg, Breslau, and London, in which cities sharp contests had been waged between the traditionalists and the reformers. A similar encounter took place in the community of Frankfort-on-the-Main, which was differentiated from the incidents previously described in that other aspects of the struggle were brought prominently to the fore.

In Frankfort, possibly more than anywhere else, the intimate connexion between the newer educational movement among the Jews and religious reform is apparent. Frankfort was noted among the Jewish communities of Germany for its excellent school, the *Philanthropin*, where modern methods of education had superseded the *Cheder* altogether. The children who attended this school received instruction in all branches of knowledge commonly taught in secular educational institutes; instruction in Jewish subjects only, as was the case in the *Cheder*, had given way to a more extended curriculum; life necessarily had a larger outlook for the pupil who attended such a school than it

¹ Graetz, *History of the Jews* (English translation), V, 529 (Philadelphia, 1895).

had for the child whose education was restricted to Jewish subjects. The spirit of the new time ruled in the one place while the spirit of the *ghetto* still brooded over the other. It is in the *Philanthropin* that the first faint traces of the reform agitation in Frankfort are discernible. Devotional exercises for the pupils were introduced in the year 1813; religious instruction had been imparted regularly since the organization of the school in 1804, but the need for a service that should edify the pupils was felt more and more strongly. In the synagogue of the general community, as a matter of course, there was no sign of change; the rabbi, Solomon Abraham Trier, was one of the most uncompromising opponents to any innovation whatsoever, as shall appear later on; the rising generation was repelled rather than attracted by the public worship; the service instituted on Sabbath and holidays in the *Philanthropin* was of a character to stimulate devotion and intensify the religious spirit of the young people within its walls; it was conducted partly in the vernacular and an address was delivered in German weekly, either by the head master, Dr. M. Hess, or the teacher, J. Johlson¹. Thus the German sermon was introduced into this community without any struggle; whereas had the attempt been made at this early day to have such sermons delivered in the communal synagogue it would have entailed a bitter struggle with the adherents of the old order, as had been the case in Berlin². As the children who attended this school grew into manhood and womanhood they leaned naturally towards reform; nay more, the services conducted in the school began to attract adults in the course of time.

In 1825 Dr. Michael Creizenach was called from Mayence to teach in the school. Creizenach was a man of great

¹ *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift für jüdische Theologie*, II, 148. For a full account of these services, see the recent publication *Festschrift zur Jahrhundertfeier der Realschule der israelitischen Gemeinde (Philanthropin) zu Frankfurt am Main, 1804-1904*, 50-54. (Frankfurt am Main, 1904.)

² *J. Q. R.*, XV, 501.

ability and of marked personality; he was an earnest advocate of the reform cause, although he wavered between decisive outspokenness and the desire to conciliate the orthodox party¹; like so many writers of that time he aimed to prove the justification for reform in Judaism from the Talmud; he hoped thus to bridge over the differences between the traditionalists and the reformers, and to reconcile the former to the changes which were taking place in the interpretation of Judaism and which he felt were absolutely necessary. But in this he could not succeed, eloquently and learnedly as he defended his thesis in a number of his earlier writings². For the thesis rested upon a fallacy³. True, passages can be cited from the Talmud in support of the contention that authorities of former times sanctioned departures from established law and custom because of changed conditions⁴; but these were isolated instances; the body of authority remained the same. The new movement in Judaism, however, meant something altogether different; the Jews were facing a state of affairs as subversive of their past as was the case when the temple of Jerusalem was destroyed and they exchanged their national existence for a world mission. Circumstances had compelled the postponement of the active carrying out of this prophetic world mission; for eighteen hundred years they were forced into isolation by the inhuman policy of both church and state, and as a defence against their hostile onslaughts "the fence of the law" was built up, and surrounded the religion in its every activity; this was the religious counterpart to their political state; now another crisis was at hand; the ghetto isolation was apparently drawing to a close,

¹ Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliten*, X, i, 100.

² xxxii. *Thesen über den Thalmud* (Frankfurt, 1831) and the earlier portions of his chief work *Shulhan Aruk oder encyclopädische Darstellung des mosaïschen Gesetzes*, four vols. (Frankfurt, 1833-1840).

³ A. Rebenstein, in Freund's *Zur Judenfrage in Deutschland*, II, 89 (Berlin, 1844).

⁴ *J. Q. R.*, XVI, 67.

as eighteen hundred years before the national existence had ceased. The Talmudical legislation no longer fitted conditions and the spirit of the Talmudical legislation could not be invoked to summon forth the light which was to distinguish between chaos and order, between past repression and prospective freedom. The fortunes of Jewry were undergoing a revolution; the Talmudical legislation in its details could not be accommodated to the changes superinduced by this revolution; there must be a new adjustment of the standards even though this involved a new interpretation of the principles of tradition; the purpose of God was as apparent in the present changes as it had been in any past events, and since God had brought this to pass it was as truly a divine revelation as any recorded of former times¹: hence it might be necessary to disregard the form that the faith assumed under the Talmudical guise and clothe it in garments altogether different. The Talmudical legislation could not be expected to meet so radical a change as the new time involved, hence the failure of such as attempted to sail the craft of Judaism through the agitated waters of the sea that had been unknown to the Talmudical mariners, by the compass and chart fashioned by them. Creizenach himself recognized this² before his death, which occurred in 1842, a short time before there took place the sharp and definite clash between the opposing parties in Judaism in the city of his adoption, which crisis he, possibly more than any single individual, helped to precipitate.

¹ See Holdheim's remarkable statement in Freund's *Zur Judenfrage in Deutschland*, II, 165-166, which is quoted below; also *ibid.*, p. 335.

² In his later writings Creizenach abandoned this position, which involved, besides the attempt to justify the reform movement by Talmudical authority, the effort to fit the Talmudical legislation to the needs of the new age, as the Talmud by means of its peculiar hermeneutics had done with the Biblical injunctions. He now advocated a return to pure Mosaism, thus disregarding the Talmudical period of Jewish development altogether; this was a serious misreading of the import of the idea of tradition, as shall be shown later on.

His appointment as teacher in the *Philanthropin* proved to be of far-reaching effect not only in the educational but also in the religious life of the scholars of the institution ; nay more, his influence extended beyond the walls of the school into the community at large. On the one hand he preached definitely and positively against the indifference of such as, having ceased to be strict observers of traditional law, form and custom, had swung to the opposite extreme of aloofness from the religious life altogether, and on the other hand he denounced the formalism into which rabbinical Judaism had degenerated, and which, being the recognized official expression of the faith, was the primary cause of the alienation of those who looked to religion to be a living reality and not merely the observance of a mass of forms, the most of which had ceased to have any significance whatsoever for that generation. Creizenach gave utterance to these ideas not only in his publications but still more effectively in the sermons preached at the weekly services in the school. Through these sermons, the services attracted many adults and the number of participants grew to such an extent that a special chapel known as the *Andachtsaal* was erected in 1828. The confirmation service for boys and girls was introduced. Similar services were conducted in another educational establishment, the Weil Institute¹. The most noteworthy effect of these services and sermons in the vernacular was that they paved the way for reform. However, the traditionalists were not blind to what was going on ; they denounced the influence of the teachers of the *Philanthropin* as disintegrating and demoralizing, and blamed the instruction in secular branches as being responsible for the breaking away from the traditions. Hence they concluded that the situation could be saved only by the re-establishment of an old-time school wherein Hebrew branches alone should be taught. It became apparent before long that such a school was doomed to failure ; in order to ensure its success they determined

¹ *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift für jüdische Theologie*, II, 149.

to introduce secular studies into the curriculum, these to be secondary, however, to the Hebrew instruction. Even with this concession the school did not flourish and had to be closed. This failure did not discourage the advocates and upholders of the traditional system of Jewish education. They sought to establish a higher institute for the exclusive study of the Talmud and the allied disciplines. A long and heated controversy on the Talmud and rabbinism ensued; voices were heard *pro* and *con*, but the Talmudical party were championing in this instance, as it appeared, a hopeless cause. They received no encouragement at the hands of the Senate of the city in their plea for the establishment of this special Talmudical academy, and the attempt was abandoned¹. The cause of reform was winning its way quietly not only through the educational work within the community, but it was furthered also by the attitude of non-interference on the part of the law-making body of the city. As has been already mentioned, ever since the Jews had been permitted to dwell in Frankfort they had been governed by special legislative Acts. After Frankfort had become a free city, and notably after the passing of the sway of Napoleon and the meeting of the Congress of Vienna, the Jews petitioned for the rights of citizenship. The sixteenth Article of the proceedings of the Congress, as adopted finally, gave rise to prolonged discussions in the Senate, which resulted in the passing of the law of Sept. 1, 1824, defining the restrictions and rights of the Jews. This law declared that the Jews could regulate their own religious affairs and were exempt from all interference of the state or the Christian community in their internal religious organization.

The agitations in the community, growing out of the differences between progressivists and reactionaries, in the fourth decade of the nineteenth century were converging gradually to the point of gaining a majority representation on the governing board of the community. This

¹ Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliten*, X, part i, 101.

promised to be of far-reaching importance because of the fact that the old age of the rabbi made the election of an associate imperative. The progressive party naturally wished to secure the appointment of one of the new school of rabbis to the post; the traditionalists were just as desirous of electing a rabbi of the old school, to whom Talmud and Shulchan Arukh were oracle and authority. This contingency, together with other difficulties arising out of questions which touched the administration of all the affairs of the Congregation, induced the Directory of the same to request the Senate to pass a general Act on the organization, the duties and the mode of procedure of the governing board of the Israelitish community. This petition aroused intense excitement, and an address signed by 212 members of the community was presented to the Senate, in which the request was preferred that all the religious and ecclesiastical affairs of the community should be taken out of the hands of the Directory, who should thereafter concern themselves only with the political, civil, social, and other non-religious concerns of the community, and that the religious affairs be made the care of a special committee as suggested in the address. This called forth a counter-address, signed by 272 names, denouncing the unwarranted procedure of the signers of the first address. The result of all this agitation was the passing of an Act by the Senate on Feb. 16, 1839, for the regulation of the affairs of the Israelitish community; the communication of the Act to the Directory was accompanied by an extract from the proceedings of the Senate which contained these striking words: "The Senate will be ready always to oppose every- and anything that may wound the conscientious scruples of believing Israelites or may disturb or place obstacles in the way of their traditional worship, but on the other hand it will encourage and support such institutions as the progressive needs of the age make necessary for the true and essential demands of religion." Cognizance is taken here of the differing wings of religious thought in

Judaism. The fourth paragraph of this Act of 1839 is of particular interest and import in the story of Jewish reform, notably in the light of later events. This paragraph was concerned with the question of the qualification of the future rabbis of the congregation; it required that the candidates for the position "be German by birth, that they must have graduated from a German gymnasium and have taken courses in Oriental languages, in historical and philosophical branches in a German university¹." This implied, as a matter of course, that the day of the rabbi trained and educated in the *yeshibah* only was past, and served notice that the aspirants to the rabbinical position in this community must be men of modern education and modern training. In so far, the progressive party had gained a victory, and the old rabbi who, as was mentioned specifically in the Act, was to remain undisturbed in his position could not but be troubled by the evident signs of the impending introduction of a new order of things in the religious guidance of the community.

These signs had been apparent for a number of years past in private circles within the Jewry of Frankfort to a much greater degree than appears from the official history of the community as embodied in Acts and regulations. Since the breaking up of mediæval conditions there had been in Frankfort, as in Berlin and other German cities, a coterie of Jewish laymen, who, educated in the gymnasia and the universities, were dissatisfied with traditional Judaism, and formed a nucleus for the dissemination of ideas advocating the reform cause. Individually, these men were at variance with the official representatives of Judaism; they were out of sympathy with the existing conditions in the synagogue; when Geiger established his *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift für jüdische Theologie* they hailed this as the dawning of a

¹ *Israelit. Annalen*, I, 102. See also a correspondence between Senator Frederick Ihm, the referee for Jewish affairs, and the Directory of the Congregation, *ibid.* 132-4.

new day ; here was a platform for the discussion of the new wants and a forum for the scientific exposition of the principles and the literature of Judaism. The gradual appearance on the scene of German Jewish life of a new school of rabbis, men graduated from the universities, a number of whom contributed to this magazine, encouraged them in the hope that definite steps would be taken towards an official adjustment of Judaism to life ; but the rabbis proceeded too slowly for them ; with very few exceptions these rabbis considered it advisable to proceed very cautiously, and to reconcile the old with the new rather than discard the old in the interest of the new ; in theory many of the rabbis quite agreed with the most pronounced opinions concerning the inadequacy and the unsuitedness of the Talmudical legislation to modern needs and the modern spirit, but in practice they continued to conduct their office along the traditional lines ; they declared their sympathy with religious progress by enlisting under the banner of what they called progressive rabbinism (*der fortschreitende Rabbinismus*) ; the laymen just spoken of had no patience with this Fabian attitude ; they wanted an outspoken declaration expressive of the change that had come over Judaism ; they began to accuse the rabbis of cowardice and to take matters into their own hands ; they wrote slightly and bitingly of the lack of courage displayed by the rabbis in not rising to the occasion, and coined the phrase "creeping rabbinism" (*der fortkriechende Rabbinismus*) as a substitute for the rabbis' own designation "progressive rabbinism."

A company of such laymen was much in evidence in Frankfort in the fourth and fifth decades of the nineteenth century ; they had formed a society significantly entitled "The Society of the Dawn" (*Die Lesegesellschaft zur aufgehenden Morgenröthe*), the members of which were described by one of their number in 1841, as "not subscribing to Talmudical ceremonialism which separates the Israelites from their fellow citizens," after a rhetorical outburst in

the following strain: "How long will the Talmud-devotees confound the pure religion of an Isaiah, a Jeremiah, a Micah with the ceremonial religion of the Pharisees? . . . How long will they continue to oppose the progress of civilization and the civic life?"¹ The first of these questions shows how little men of this stamp understood the true inwardness of the reform movement in its attitude towards the Talmud and how superficial was their understanding of the true development of Judaism.

An anonymous article which appeared in Geiger's *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift* in 1837², and which was written supposedly by one of these Jewish laymen of Frankfort³, describes their attitude so fully and so clearly that it may be considered almost in the light of a preliminary notice of the formation of the Society of the Friends of Reform, the subject of this essay. The article is entitled "Jews and Judaism," and has the sub-heading "Reflections of a Layman." After setting forth the progress of the Jews in various branches of learning in the new era, their strides in the struggle for civil emancipation and their growing participation in the life and endeavour of society, he declares broadly that although "the Jews have progressed, Judaism has stood still." There may be some, he continues, who have a correct understanding of what Judaism really is, but as long as there is no clear, unmistakable declaration of what is to be considered pure Judaism and what only temporary form, so long will the religion continue in its present distortion; "as yet Judaism is supposed to include every jot of the traditional rabbinical interpretation; the Shulchan Arukh with its insatiable commentaries and super-commentaries is still recognized as the authoritative code, a deviation from which is considered equivalent to a deviation from the religion itself." He declares that the prime need is a sifting of the mass of

¹ *Israelit des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, II (1841), 82.

² pp. 161-71.

³ Jost, *Gesch. der Israeliten*, X, part iii, 212, note 3.

accretions that have attached themselves to Judaism, and the separation of the pure metal from the dross; the rabbis should do this; he recognizes, however, that the rabbis, ministering as they do to congregations composed of many elements, are placed in a difficult position, and in their longing to have the confidence of all are fearful of taking decisive steps forward even if they would. Be this therefore as it may; be the rabbis chargeable with neglect in a fearless expression of their religious convictions or no, "it becomes the duty of us non-theologians, if we have the welfare of Judaism, truth, and progress at heart, to make solemn declaration of our views in order to remove from ourselves the reproach—first, of indifference, and secondly, of a contradiction between our thoughts and acts on the one hand and our religious profession on the other, as well as to encourage by this sign of earnest participation such rabbis as are perhaps ready and anxious to take decisive steps forward." He recognizes that non-theologians have neither the requisite knowledge nor authority, but this declaration of theirs is to be only a general statement of their convictions, and is to be rather in the nature of an address to the rabbis of Germany calling upon them to state whether the declaration is a truthful representation or no. But of all things it was necessary to publish such a declaration; all else was detail that could be worked out later; this declaration should make known that the signers "do not feel in conscience bound to invest the prescriptions of the Talmud, to say nothing of those of the later rabbis, in as far as these cannot be proven by scientific exegesis to have been derived directly from the Bible or to have been handed down by Moses, with any greater authority than is accorded all other temporary religious institutions whose reasonableness and whose agreement with the spirit of Judaism must first be established." He concludes by saying that in whatever community a sufficient number of intelligent laymen may be found they must unite in a declaration of this kind. The cleft

between practice and profession must be removed. . . . The differences in Judaism exist; better that the sympathizers range themselves together than that they act single-handedly; better that a clear understanding be arrived at than that compromises be resorted to; better, in short, that the present state of affairs be made the starting-point of true progress than that, through wilful blindness, it lead to complete disintegration.

Without doubt, such were the sentiments that prevailed with a large number of Jews throughout Germany; these sentiments crystallized into definite form in Frankfort, where in November, 1842, a number of Jews formed themselves into a society which they called "The Society of the Friends of Reform" (*Verein der Reformfreunde*). They were all laymen; it was distinctly a lay movement; the absence of all theologians from the membership of the society was so noticeable a feature that it could not but arouse comment, especially as the purpose of the society was pre-eminently religious. The charge was preferred against its promoters that the exclusion of theologians was intentional; Dr. M. A. Stern of Göttingen, famed as a mathematician and undoubtedly a man of exceptional intellectual powers, wrote a series of open letters¹ in answer to attacks upon the society. I shall have occasion to refer to these letters frequently, as they are the *apologia* for the society. In one place he meets the charge of exclusion of rabbis from the society by claiming that there is no longer any priestly caste in Judaism; there is no distinction between rabbis and laymen on the score of sacerdotalism; the only recognized distinction in Judaism is between those who know and those who do not know the law. Herein lies a great principle of religious freedom, and the fact that the society is composed altogether of so-called laymen is equivalent to a rebuke to the assumptions of the occupants

¹ *Offene Briefe über den Reformverein; Israelit des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, vol. V (1844), 171-175, 179-183, 187-191, 197-201, 205-209, 285-288, 293-297, 301-304; VI (1845), 41-43, 49-53, 57-59.

of the rabbinical office who would bring into Judaism this distinction between rabbi and layman, a distinction thoroughly foreign to the genius of the faith¹; he refers to the article published some years before in Geiger's theological magazine, which urged the formation of societies of laymen for the very purpose for which the Frankfort society was founded². Still, despite this explanation which contains a great and salient truth, there seems to be little doubt that the real reason for the exclusion of rabbis was a certain contempt which the "intellectuals" among the laity felt for the occupants of the rabbinical positions;—this trace of intellectual snobbishness is apparent even to this day. The rabbis had not grappled with the religious problem as vigorously as these laymen thought they should have done; they themselves would therefore take the matter in their own hands and lead the way³. Geiger, the foremost figure in the Jewish theological world, was a close friend of Stern's; letters passed between them in one of which Geiger speaks of "your contempt for the theologians—which you deny, it is true, but which is only too apparent"⁴. This sharp differentiation was unfortunate inasmuch as it accentuated the very distinction that Stern claimed the society desired to eradicate, and arrayed all the rabbis, with one exception⁵, against the movement.

The brief career of the Frankfort Reform Society was one of the most striking episodes of the drama of Jewish religious development that is being unfolded in these pages. The men who formed the society were actuated by the conviction that there must be many Jews throughout Germany who were ripe for a new expression of the principles of Judaism, since the changed political and social status, the acquisition of secular knowledge, in short

¹ op. cit., V, 182.

² Supra.

³ "Professional theologians were excluded intentionally from the deliberations of the society."—Jost, *Gesch. der Isr.*, X, part iii, 213.

⁴ Geiger, *Nachgelassene Schriften*, V, 169.

⁵ M. Hess of Saxe-Weimar, editor of the *Israelit des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, which newspaper became, in a measure, the organ of the society.

the complete break between their external fortunes and the conditions of the life of their ancestors must make them feel the impossibility of fitting the rabbinical interpretation of the religion to the modern Jewish environment. It was also felt that if they would make a short, sharp, and definite declaration of what they considered the essential principles of the faith, this would encourage all who entertained like sentiments to do the same, and the concerted movement away from rabbinical Judaism, many of whose enactments were disregarded by a multitude of contemporaneous Jews, and towards a modern Judaism would be begun.

The members of the society met privately for deliberation and discussion. They formulated five principles as their declaration of faith, viz.: (1) that they consider the Mosaic religion capable of continuous development; (2) that they do not consider binding the various ritual, dietary, and other laws concerned with bodily practices that emanated from the ancient polity; (3) that they do not consider circumcision binding either as a religious act or a symbol; (4) that they do not recognize the Talmud as authoritative; and (5) that they do not expect or long for a Messiah who will lead the Jews back to Palestine, but regard the country to which they belong either by birth or citizenship as their only fatherland. This original declaration of principles was altered at a subsequent meeting, when it was determined to omit paragraphs 2 and 3 and cast the other three paragraphs into another form; this was done and the revised draft, which will be cited presently, was adopted and promulgated as the creed of the society. The omission of the two paragraphs was due to the argument which was advanced successfully that such a declaration should be general in character and not touch special points about which there were still such decided differences of opinion, even among many who might confidently be expected to sympathize with a forward movement.

They did not make their deliberations nor this declara-

tion public at once, for they felt that the time was not yet ripe; they desired to secure first the co-operation of sympathizers throughout Germany. The declaration of principles, together with a prefatory address setting forth the objects and aims of the society, was sent privately to prominent men in various localities to obtain their signatures; this delayed the work greatly as it took weeks at times to secure one signature; as a result, only some fifty signatures had been obtained by the beginning of August, 1843¹. The most celebrated of the men whom they addressed were Gabriel Riesser, of Hamburg, the dauntless champion of Jewish political emancipation in the German States, who had expressed frequently his sympathy with the movement for religious reform², and Dr. M. A. Stern, of Göttingen, who had been present at some of the preliminary meetings. Letters were exchanged whose purpose was the free and unhampered expression of opinions; these letters were of a confidential nature, but some of those that passed between Riesser and Stern were given out for publication by an adherent of the orthodox party into whose hands they had fallen³, together with excerpts from the proceedings of the society which had been altogether private; these extracts were garbled and edited in a manner to discredit the society, which in self-defence was now forced to give to the public prints the address and declaration mentioned above. This was in August, 1843.

These official documents of the society were three in number, marked *A*, *B*, and *C*. *A* was a circular letter accompanying the documents; *B* was the address which explained the reasons and aims of the movement, and was entitled "Programme of a Declaration of German Israelites. Presented for Consideration to friends of religious reform in

¹ M. Isler, *Gabriel Riesser's Leben, nebst Mittheilungen aus seinen Schriften*, I, 359 (Frankfort, 1867).

² *J. Q. R.*, XVI, 47.

³ *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, VII (1843), no. 35.

Judaism, 1843" (*Programm zu einer Erklärung deutscher Israeliten, Freunden religiöser Reform im Judenthume zur Beherzigung vorgelegt*, 1843); and C was the declaration proper¹. The letter, which was signed by Simon Maas, Dr. jur., in the name of the Jewish Friends of Reform, requested the co-operation of the addressee in the undertaking with which a number of reputable Israelites had declared themselves in sympathy, and for the furtherance of which many highly respected men in Germany were ready. The founders of the society requested the signatures of all "who do not expect a Messiah to lead them back to Palestine; all who do not accord any authority or obligatory power to the confused and frequently meaningless rabbinical interpretations and injunctions; all who strive for a form of faith whose enlivening principle is pure Mosaism." The letter asserted further that reform in Judaism existed in reality, and that all that was necessary was an open declaration; as a result of this the reform movement would be sure to receive fitting recognition and become a working force in Jewish life.

The so-called programme opens with a eulogy of Moses and the religion he established; this religion is capable of unceasing development; however, many of the institutions of Mosaism were of a national character and dependent upon the possession of a particular land. When in the course of time the land was lost and the nationality came to an end, many of the Mosaic ordinances ceased to exercise any binding force, e.g. the laws regulating the ownership of land, the prerogatives of the priests and Levites, the sacrificial ritual and the criminal code. Their place was taken, however, by a mass of ritual and ceremonial laws to which in time the greatest importance came to be attached, and Judaism became a system of observances whereby the spiritual content and import of

¹ These documents were published in full in Freund's *Zur Judenfrage in Deutschland*, 1843, pp. 257-65 and as the supplement to no. 44 of Vol. IV (1843) of the *Israelit des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*.

the religion were dimmed. This externalism assumed ever greater prominence during the ages of exclusion and oppression; the Jew clung to every observance, custom, and ceremony that had developed in the course of the ages. When, however, the era of freedom dawned, men arose who realized with dismay how far Judaism had travelled along this path and how pronounced was the difference between the inner purity and dignity of the divine truth of the religion and the external form that it had assumed. The new opportunities had been grasped by such as these, and they had acquired the culture of the people among whom they lived. They sought to extricate the jewel of Judaism from the dross with which it had become encrusted; they found their inspiration in the prophets of the Old Testament who had proclaimed that the spirit of the religion was independent of the blood of bullocks. . . . Yet attempts at reform up to this time consisted merely in liturgical imitations of other religions or in compromises with the followers of rabbinism. Rarely did any one think of emphasizing *the capacity of Mosaism for unending development*. In so far the charge is true that no decisive step has been taken by the Jews to conform their religious practice to the higher culture to which they owe their intellectual progress. Civilization has freed them from rabbinical jurisdiction; it must be our task to purify the religion of all antiquated disfigurements and present it in a worthy form. "In our day the difference between the inner truth of Judaism and its external form has become especially acute. Nurtured by the intellectual culture of the age many of those who are accounted members of the Mosaic religious community have arrived at the conviction that most of the practical commands, the observance of which constitutes the bulk of present-day Judaism, rest on human and temporary premises. They claim rightfully that this external form is for the most part without significance, yes even unworthy of pure religion, and they draw the inner content of divine truth,

which an earlier generation found in the Law, from those treasures of wisdom alone which have won over to the truth so many great spirits of all nations. Thus thousands have renounced allegiance to Talmudic rabbinical Judaism, and are connected outwardly with the Mosaic religious community only by habit or by the control of the state or by family ties. This condition of affairs is destructive and immoral; for as long as a man lives in a community he should not pass as something altogether different externally from what he is in thought and inner conviction. The Jew who has grown indifferent to his religion on this account must decide whether he will continue to be known merely as a Jew by birth, thus sacrificing free-will to habit, and being deprived of all outward religious association that is expressive of his inner conviction or—whether, longing for some tangible form, he will join some other religious association. . . . But those who cannot content themselves with either of these alternatives will pin their faith to the belief in the capacity of Judaism for development, and instead of continuing in a state of indolent lethargy will aim to harmonize their spiritual convictions with their professions. . . . Moved by these considerations, a number of German Israelites have determined to give expression to their opinions of the present conditions in Judaism through a public declaration, and to renounce formally their allegiance to all objectionable commands, and to all antiquated customs, which to all intents and purposes they have rejected long ago.” They disclaimed any purpose of desiring to obtain through this declaration more political rights than were accorded to the strict observers of the rabbinical code; neither did they intend to formulate any dogmas or create a sect or a schism; all that they purposed was an open, honest statement of facts and beliefs as had obtained in Jewish life for a number of years past; and particularly did they desire to convince competent religious teachers that truth has a home in Israel, and to encourage such to support with all the weight of their learning the

religious standpoint of truth-loving laymen. The address concludes with the words, "least of all is it our desire to hurt the susceptibilities of the strict adherents of rabbinical Judaism. Let us hope that success will crown this our honest endeavour, not only to give our religion a worthier form, but also to expound the pure content of Judaism, and to remove from it everything which has degraded and dishonoured it in the eyes of thinking men. Every participant in this movement feels already great inner satisfaction in that he has chosen his standpoint in reference to the highest spiritual interests, and has paid allegiance to the truth. Let us begin bravely then a task not only necessary from the civic standpoint and intellectually justified but also highly moral and, in all truth, pleasing to God."

Hereupon followed the famous Declaration ; it consisted of three paragraphs as follows:—

1. We recognize the possibility of unlimited development in the Mosaic religion.

2. The collection of controversies, dissertations, and prescriptions commonly designated by the name Talmud possesses for us no authority either from the dogmatic or the practical standpoint.

3. A Messiah who is to lead back the Israelites to the land of Palestine is neither expected nor desired by us ; we know no fatherland except that to which we belong by birth or citizenship.

As already mentioned, the publication of these documents was premature, and had been forced by the excitement aroused by the reports circulated by the enemies of the society in the public prints ; it had been the intention of the founders of the society to refrain from all public activity and agitation until so many signatures had been obtained from all sections of Germany as to prove that this was a great popular movement ; they had not had time to accomplish this purpose, if in truth it could ever have been accomplished with the programme they had formulated.

This, of course, must remain conjecture for all time ; the facts in the case are that the publication of the documents of the society called forth a storm of opposition and denunciation that was in truth overwhelming ; orthodox, conservatives, moderates, reformers, all joined in reprehending the presumption of this handful of men whose address and declaration showed how ill prepared they were for the task they had undertaken, and how inadequately they understood the true import of Jewish development. The thunders of the opposition sounded from all quarters ; the rabbis,—from Holdheim¹, Geiger, and Einhorn, the reformers, to Trier and Ettlinger, the uncompromisingly orthodox,—wrote in criticism and disparagement ; the society found but one sympathizer and defender among the rabbis, M. Hess of Saxe-Weimar. But not only among the rabbis was this resistance met with ; the most prominent layman in all Germany was Gabriel Riesser ; as soon as he became acquainted with the three points of the declaration he announced his unalterable opposition in a letter to Stern ; although an active and enthusiastic advocate of religious reform he declared the Frankfort movement a step backward rather than a step forward. He feared also the impression that the paragraphs of the declaration would make upon the general public ; the first he considered a mere phrase ; the second and third were simple retorts upon the watchwords of Judaeophobia. He despised this tendency for it does not serve the truth ; its only purpose is the effect it may produce upon the civic authorities². Stern answered him at length, but I pass this answer by for the present since I shall give at length his elaborate defence of the society which appeared some time later³ ; Riesser found no time to reply to Stern, but

¹ Except in the circumcision controversy in which Holdheim supported the position assumed by members of the society, *infra*.

² Isler, *Gabriel Riesser's Leben, nebst Mittheilungen aus seinen Briefen*, I, 358-9.

³ The society itself answered its critics in an official document dated December, 1843, and signed by Dr. Neukirch in the name of the members of the society. The statements in the document are quite the same as

that he had not been convinced appears from the fact that when the affairs of the society became a matter of newspaper comment in the summer of 1843, and Stern and Riesser were named as its chief sponsors, Riesser denied this statement publicly and declared his opposition to the society¹. The most striking attacks upon the organization were made by Leopold Stein, rabbi in Burgkunststadt, Bavaria, and elected rabbi of Frankfort in March, 1844², M. Gutmann, rabbi in Redwitz³, S. D. Luzzato⁴, David Einhorn⁵, Michael Sachs⁶, Zacharias Frankel⁷, and by many others whose opinions were published in the collection of responses gathered by the old rabbi of Frankfort, Solomon Abraham Trier, and which will receive extended notice in the course of this article when the attitude of the society on the circumcision question will be considered. The most notable defence was that of M. A. Stern in answer to the attacks of Stein, Gutmann, Einhorn, Hirsch, and Mannheimer; the society was also defended by M. Hess in five leading articles in his newspaper⁸. In these articles he applauds the act of the founders of the society; he states that the Jews have advanced but not Judaism, and that official Judaism is at fault, that life calls for reforms, and that this declara-

those made by Stern, and given at length in the course of this article. See Freund's *Zur Judenfrage in Deutschland* (1844), pp. 116-22; see also *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, vol. VIII (1844), no. 1, p. 5; *Orient*, vol. V (1844), no. 6, p. 43.

¹ *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, VII (1843), no. 33.

² "Der Frankfurter Reformverein vom Standpunkte des fortschreitenden Rabbinismus," *Literaturblatt des Orients*, 1843, nos. 46-8.

³ *ibid.* 1844, nos. 1 and 2.

⁴ *ibid.* 1843, no. 51.

⁵ *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, VIII (1844), no. 7.

⁶ *Zeitschrift für die religiösen Interessen des Judenthums*, I (1844), 49-60.

⁷ *ibid.* 60-72. Frankel opens his article by saying that the society "cannot be considered Jewish, and belongs to Judaism as little as to any other religion," and closes by declaring that "the reform society is the most unfortunate attempt that has ever been made. It has condemned itself and has been condemned by public opinion"; see also *ibid.* 302, where he says "they were honest in their method, but their method was not that of Judaism."

⁸ *Israelit des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, IV (1843), 183, 187, 191, 195, and 203.

tion is the first evidence that enlightened Jews have given of a clear understanding of the situation. He defends the society from the chief charges that had been made against it; these charges were that the three paragraphs of the Declaration are not far-reaching enough; that they are only negative (thus Frankel called them "articles of unbelief," and Einhorn "a confession of unbelief"); that they were indefinite; that the third paragraph discredits the patriotism of Jews who still believe in the personal Messiah and the return to Palestine; and lastly, that it was fathered altogether by laymen and non-theologians, while theologians alone could and should inaugurate such a movement. I cannot stop to give Hess's reply to these charges and criticisms, notably as I feel that space should be given primarily to the defence of M. A. Stern which also answered these points. The open letters of Stern written in answer to the attacks upon the society by Rabbis Stein and Gutmann are the most remarkable literary product of the agitation called forth by the formation of the Reform Society¹. He takes up the criticisms of Stein and Gutmann point for point and answers them without reserve, often sharply, sarcastically, and caustically. A brief *résumé* of his argument makes unnecessary the separate quoting of the objections of Stein and Gutmann, as these are indicated sufficiently in the reply. The first letters are addressed to Stein. The reason for laymen taking the initiative was that rabbis had not done so, although they had bewailed frequently the sorry condition of affairs in Judaism and had declared reform absolutely necessary². The Reform Society, inspired by these statements, had taken the bold plunge, but had indicated in its declaration only

¹ The open letters to Einhorn, Hirsch, and Mannheimer in Nos. 6-8 of vol. VI of the *Israelit des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* consist for the most part of mere personalities, and therefore I dismiss them with this reference; they were the third series of open letters; the first two series to Stein and Gutmann contain the gist of the defence.

² *Israelit des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 1844, 174. See also M. Creizenach, *Des frommen Israeliten Lehre und Leben*, *ibid.* II, 21.

the absolutely necessary doctrines that would appeal to the contemporary generation as expressing the idea of development in Judaism¹. In answer to Stein's designation of them as reformers he says, "We are not reformers; we could not and would not be. We are merely reformed; the age, advanced intelligence, possibly also progressive rabbinism, are the reformers. We desire to make no proselytes; we wish to induce no one, who is not of a like opinion with us, to join us; we have merely called upon such who think as we do to combine with us. Therefore the 'Declaration' is drawn up in such a way as to express our individual view²." As for the third paragraph concerning the Messiah, rabbis had said the same thing time and time again, and Stein does not even advert to this paragraph in his criticism, hence he must agree with it³.

"As to the second declaration Stein does not argue; he simply accuses us of not knowing the Talmud;" Stern answers sarcastically, and enters a flat denial claiming that they do know the Talmud; this, however, is not to the point; the point is the authority of the Talmud. "The Talmud shall receive acknowledgment for all that is of value in it. We have denied only its authority, not its historical value⁴." It is the first paragraph of the Declaration, however, that has been made to bear the brunt of the hostile attacks; and yet, what does it say?—That the members of the society recognize in Mosaism the possibility of unlimited development; what does this imply but the principle of reform? something which progressive rabbinism, the religious standpoint of Stein, has declared time and again⁵.

Stern then discusses the permanent element in Judaism; this is certainly not the ceremonies as progressive rabbinism has stated often, certainly not the belief in miracles, certainly not metaphysical truths which are rare in the Bible. "What then is the permanent element in Judaism? Nothing

¹ *Israelit des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 1844, 175.

³ *ibid.* 180.

⁴ *ibid.* 181.

² *ibid.* 179.

⁵ *ibid.* 188.

else is unchangeably permanent except the glorious idea of its world-embracing destiny to which its whole history bears witness, nothing else but its divine mission to develop within itself the belief in God and to spread this over the whole earth. Therefore, too, it must be able to appreciate the ideas of all ages and the conditions of all places; therefore it must not be limited by any temporal institution. . . . It must eliminate all institutions that have outlived their usefulness, and must bear within itself the possibility of unlimited development." The Reform Society considered it a bounden duty to give expression to this thought; it is a jewel which has been recovered out of stunted rabbinical Judaism ¹.

The purpose of the Reform Society was simply to make this general declaration, not to carry it out in practical reforms as applicable to special Mosaic laws; this is to be the work of the rabbis. Some of the members of the society, the writer among them, wished to go farther and specify certain Mosaic institutions that have outlived their original significance, but the majority decided otherwise on the ground that their chief purpose was to gain the adherence of all who believe in the principle that Mosaism is capable of unlimited development ².

In answer to Stein's question in what the society was specifically Jewish, and whether the most orthodox Christian or Moslem could not become a member, he says that the first paragraph shows that this is impossible, because neither Christian nor Moslem believes in the possibility of the unlimited development of Mosaism, holding as they do that a new revelation was necessary for the salvation of mankind ³.

He denies the statement made frequently at that time that Bruno Bauer's essay on the Jewish question ⁴ was

¹ *Israelit des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 1844, 190.

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.* 197.

⁴ "Die Judenfrage," in *Deutsche Jahrbücher* for Nov. 1842; published separately, Brunswick, 1843. This anti-Semitic essay was one of the literary and

the direct cause of the formation of the society. The deliberations looking to its formation began in September, 1842; in the beginning of November the writer had communicated with Dr. Riesser on the subject, and Bauer's essay did not appear till several weeks later¹.

He meets Stein's charge that the doings of the society retarded the civil emancipation of the orthodox Jews, by saying—"if you demand that we shall not retard your civil emancipation we may demand certainly with equal justice that you should not interfere with our spiritual emancipation, for what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. We are not enacting a farce, nor is our society a mere matter of convenience that we will abandon at your desire; we have a sacred duty to fulfil which is nothing less than to extricate ourselves from a thoroughly false religious situation²."

Stein had averred that the paragraphs of the Declaration were purely negative; Stern retorts by calling upon him to show the way and to give them something positive, fortified with "reasons taken not from policy but from Jewish theology, with reasons that do not presuppose the authority of the Talmud, and which would therefore not satisfy us³." He denies that he is the author of the official documents of the society, and claims that he saw them only after they were published⁴; he closes with

journalistic sensations of that day, and elicited many replies from Jews; the claim of the enemies of the Reform Society that this essay gave the impulse to its formation rested without doubt upon the passage of the essay in which Bauer comments upon the statement of the advocates of the emancipation of the Jews that they desire to return to pure Mosaism; he declares this to be senseless, since Mosaism means sacrifice, priestly caste, and peculiar property legislation; its logical consequence is the Talmud; both Old Testament and Talmud are chimerical and unreal; emancipation will be impossible until the Jews cease to be Jews and become men,—in other words, "when they become in reality men who will not permit themselves to be separated from their fellow men by any barrier mistakenly considered essential."

¹ *Israelit des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 1844, 198.

² *ibid.* 199.

³ *ibid.* 200.

⁴ *ibid.* 201.

accusing the progressive rabbis, among whom Stein classed himself, of cowardice and with wishing to conciliate both parties, and hence with having no definite principles. "You and all who share your opinion are greatly mistaken," thus he addresses Stein in taking leave of the subject, "you will never succeed in conciliating the orthodox party; they will use you against progress so long as you permit yourselves to be used; but the moment you presume to act against their will you will be damned. The orthodox know full well that they cannot surrender one iota without endangering their whole position. You will alienate more and more the cultured and progressive elements because you refuse to satisfy the demands of culture, inasmuch as your practical reforms restrict themselves to a few changes in the service. . . . What is the gain of such a scarcely perceptible advance? Is this the only factor, the only institution in which salvation is to be found, or is it not rather in the purified religious consciousness for whose edification the external institutions will adapt themselves of necessity? . . . If you are not possessed of courage, then be content to lose yourselves among the crowd, and do not aspire to leadership; least of all should you glorify your faint-heartedness as the correct policy and call the courageous foolhardy. Let him who is cowardly and faint-hearted turn back and go to his home. Judaism will fulfil its mission without you and in spite of you; help and salvation will come from another place¹."

In his open letter to Gutmann, Stern discusses first the Messianic question, and shows how the hope for the coming of the Messiah has developed in Judaism; he challenges Gutmann's statement that this hope runs like a red thread through the Bible; the Pentateuch says nothing concerning it, nor do many of the prophets; it is a late growth on the stem of Jewish thought, and thousands of the present generation have repudiated it; this being the case, how can they utter the prayers supplicating for the coming

¹ *Israelit des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 1844, 209.

of a Messiah and the rebuilding of Jerusalem ; such prayer is really blasphemy, for it is equivalent to uttering a falsehood ; “if we make supplication to God for something the direct opposite of which we wish for in our hearts, what is this but a mockery ? does it not change prayer, the purest relation of man to God, into shocking blasphemy ?¹” He therefore declares that he will cease to attend the synagogue as long as these conditions exist unless forced to do so by law, a possible contingency in view of certain proposed strange legislation. It is absolutely necessary for the Reform Society to institute a service which will express the honest convictions of the Jew of to-day. He calls upon the rabbis to revise the prayer-book as proposed by the rabbinical conference just held at Brunswick², and to eliminate altogether those prayers which are at variance with the people’s belief ; “the attempt has been made, it is true, to eliminate some of these prayers, but is a lie less a lie because it is uttered once instead of ten times ?³”

Since the authority of the Talmud was repudiated, the Bible was accepted naturally as the all-important authority ; but the letter of the Bible is dead like every letter, and becomes living only if it receives the breath of the spirit ; it requires human interpretation⁴. The meaning of the first paragraph of the Declaration is this : “the progressive development of mankind is unlimited ; if Judaism is to keep pace with this, if it is to share in the shaping of the future of mankind, i.e. if it is not to pass away, it must contain within itself the possibility of unlimited development. This is the plain meaning of the first paragraph of our Declaration⁵.”

There must be development in religion ; the divine is perfect, it is true, but it must accommodate itself to human imperfection ; hence a command suitable for one age may be outgrown by a subsequent age ; thus, blood-revenge is

¹ *Israelit des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 1844, 287.

² June 12-19, 1844.

³ *Israelit des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, V, 287.

⁴ *ibid.* 290.

⁵ *ibid.* 294.

sanctioned in the Bible ; but this does not mean that all future ages must regard this primitive institution as sacred. "Mankind outgrows laws which were formulated for earlier imperfect stages of civilization as a child outgrows its clothes ; the law ceases to be operative of itself as soon as the conditions that gave it birth cease. Hence if we do not wish to surrender the sublime conception of the continual progress of mankind, we will have to concede that religion, the expression of the human cognition of God, must keep pace with this progressive development¹." He proceeds to explain the purpose of the Reform Society : "Away with all explanations that simply introduce new shackles of the law in place of the old ones ; let us thank God that Judaism has no dogmas ; away with attempts at compromise in this our time, in which scarcely any two persons think alike in religious matters. What we can and should do is to clear away that which is dead ; for this we should unite in active endeavour,—this is the purpose of the Reform Society²." Gutmann had charged that the Reform Society denied divine revelation ; Stern replies with a definition of revelation as the progressive advance of the spirit of man ; belief in the literal revelation as described in the Bible, Exod. xix–xxi, is not defended by any but the most orthodox ; the least rationalizing of this passage would lay any one open to the charge directed against the Reform Society, and surely Gutmann would not defend the literal acceptance of this passage which states that God descended upon Mount Sinai, that he spoke, that the elders saw God, that Moses approached God, &c., and continues, "It must be proved whether the positive element of Judaism consists of stories or of its history (*in Geschichten oder in seiner Geschichte*) of the manner in which it grew, or of that which it became³" ; he demands from Gutmann

¹ *Israelit des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, V, 296.

² *ibid.* 297.

³ "Es muss sich zeigen, ob das Positive des Judenthums in Geschichten oder in seiner Geschichte, in der Art, wie es geworden, oder in dem, was es geworden, besteht." *Ibid.* 304.

a statement as to whether he accepts this passage of Exodus literally; if he does not he occupies the same platform as the Reform Society.

Despite this spirited and full defence the society, one might almost say, "died a-borning." Yet although it proved so flat and wellnigh complete a failure as a practical organization, and although its founders did not grasp or comprehend the true significance of the development of Judaism, one point cannot be denied, nor may it be overlooked, and that is that the Frankfort Reform Society was an honest attempt to make open declaration of the sentiments that were entertained by a large section of Jews. Reform was an accomplished fact in the lives and thoughts of thousands; the commands of traditional Judaism were not observed by them; Judaism had entered upon a new stage; the Reform Society was a sign of the times; its promoters wished to square profession with practice. That its Declaration was inadequate and its method ill-chosen, that its procedure was violent instead of ordered, that it simply negatived instead of building up from a sure and positive foundation, that it represented revolution rather than reform¹, schism rather than continuous development, may not blind our eyes to the all-important merits of honesty of intention and recognition of the true state of affairs in Jewry². But their action was little more than a spasmodic outburst; the three articles of their creed evince all the limitation of their thought, and their failure to grasp the true idea of de-

¹ See A. Rebenstein's remarkable article "Unsere Gegenwart" in Freund's *Zur Judenfrage in Deutschland*, II, 13 ff., 22 ff. This and the article by Dr. S. Holdheim having the same title (*ibid.* 149-71), are two most striking statements of the condition of religious affairs among the Jews of Germany at this stirring time, and of the true meaning and purpose of reform.

² See the letter of Dr. Theodor Creizenach, one of the founders of the society, written on Sept. 2, 1843, to Dr. Wilhelm Freund, the editor of the magazine *Zur Judenfrage in Deutschland*, and published in Vol. II of the same, pp. 175-8; also the editorial article on the purpose of the society, in *Israelit des neunz. Jahrh.*, VI (1845), 161.

velopment in Judaism, which is the key-stone in the arch of reform. This appears clearly and unmistakably from the first two paragraphs of the Declaration, viz. the cry "back to Mosaism," and the repudiation of the Talmud. It was fashionable in those days for anti-rabbinical and anti-Talmudical Jews to affect the style and title of professors of the Mosaic Faith (*Bekennner des mosaischen Glaubens*), indicating thus their hostile attitude towards the Talmud¹; this earned for them the soubriquets of Mosaites and Protestant Jews, for it was claimed that theirs was an attitude similar to that taken by the Protestants of the Reformation period in the history of Christianity; viz. the acceptance of the Bible and the repudiation of all subsequent tradition. Now the true knowledge of Judaism makes it clear that the Books of Moses and the remaining writings preserved in the Bible represent stages in the development of Judaism, as do the literary remains of every succeeding era; the Bible made Judaism as little as did the Talmud; Judaism brought forth the books of the Bible as well as the Talmud, and all other products of the Jewish spirit. Hence it is an utter misunderstanding of Judaism to disregard any phase of its development; each age had its needs and met them as well as it could; the Talmud and the codes served their purpose in the outworking of the faith, as well as did the Biblical books; what is true in either is eternal; what was temporary in either was for special times and circumstances, but from both as from every expression of the spirit of Judaism true reform draws its inspiration. It is folly to limit the possibilities of Judaism to the content of Mosaism; it is folly no less to attempt to erase from the record the centuries marked by the rise and rule of Talmudism; every mode of expression that Judaism has assumed, Mosaism, prophetism, Talmudism, rabbinism, even cabbalism, contributes its quota to the understanding of the essentials;

¹ See five leading articles entitled "Der reine Mosaismus" (Pure Mosaism), in the *Israelit des neunz. Jahrh.*, II (1841), 1, 5, 9, 13, 17.

each represents the fitting of the eternal elements of the faith to particular circumstances; this is the principle at the root of the reform movement, and therefore those who interpreted it correctly defined it as a new phase in the age-long development, a new aspect produced by the new revelation of God in the unfolding of the ages¹. This the Frankfort reformers failed utterly to grasp. The third paragraph of their Declaration repudiating the belief in the personal Messiah and the return to Palestine, was correct in itself as a tenet of the reform movement, but should have been merely one of a number of statements instead of being posited as the only special declaration, the other two being of a general character.

The almost unanimous disapproval of the society was justified by the facts in the case, and it takes its place in

¹ Holdheim particularly gave expression to this thought. I reproduce several of his significant statements on the subject: "The present requires a principle that shall enunciate clearly that a law, even though divine, is potent only so long as the conditions and circumstances of life, to meet which it was enacted, continue; when these change, however, the law also must be abrogated, even though it have God for its author. For God himself has shown indubitably that with the change of the circumstances and conditions of life for which he once gave those laws, the laws themselves cease to be operative, that they *shall* be observed no longer, because they *can* be observed no longer. . . . The present age and its guiding principle, as thus formulated, recognize the working of God in history; it believes truly and firmly in the providential guidance of the fortune of mankind; it looks upon the deeds recorded in the history of mankind as the deeds of God, whereby he speaks as clearly as he ever did; a particular revelation of God to a single person is dispensable when God speaks to all and reveals his will to all" (Freund's *Zur Judenfrage in Deutschland*, II, 165 f.). "True reform can rest only on the recognition of the truth that God commanded certain laws for certain times and certain conditions of life, and that it would be acting against the divine will to fulfil the law by a forced and casuistical interpretation of its meaning after the conditions have changed so essentially as to preclude the carrying-out of the law in its correct and original significance." Ibid. Salomon put this same idea in a most striking way at the Conference of Rabbis held at Brunswick in 1844, when he said, "The age also is a Bible through whose mouth God speaks to Israel" ("auch die Zeit sei eine Bibel, durch deren Mund Gott zu Israel spricht"), *Protokolle der ersten Rabbiner-Versammlung*, 91, Braunschweig, 1844.

the history of the reform movement not for any full and rounded interpretation it gave of the purpose of this movement, but as one of the significant births of that period of travail, the fifth decade of the nineteenth century. Still it is quite possible that this Reform Society would not have been the storm centre of so fierce a tempest had it confined itself to the theoretical statements comprised in its programme, and not become identified with the agitation that shook the Frankfort community from centre to circumference in connexion with the circumcision question. This it was which really roused its opponents. As mentioned above, the first draft of the Declaration contained five paragraphs, the third of which asserted that the members of the society do not consider circumcision binding, either as a religious act or symbol. Although this paragraph was eliminated from the final draft, it expressed the convictions of a majority of the members of the society, and when an instance really occurred of a father neglecting to have his child circumcised¹, the excitement aroused in the community knew no bounds².

The attention of the sanitary bureau of Frankfort had been called to the fatal outcome of a number of cases of circumcision; in order to prevent such mishaps in the

¹ This man was not a member of the Reform Society, but his action was in sympathy with the expressed views of the members of the society; therefore the society was made the target for the shafts of the opposition. It was not long before a second similar case of neglect to have the rite performed occurred, and this time the offending father was a member of the society. *Israelit des neunz. Jahrh.*, V, 24.

² At this time an anonymous publication appeared entitled, *Circumcision historically and dogmatically considered*, by Ben Amithai (*Ueber die Beschneidung in historischer und dogmatischer Beziehung*); this publication was looked upon generally as a pronouncement of the Reform Society; the author put the question, "Is circumcision an absolute condition of Judaism, so that an uncircumcised child cannot be considered a Jew, or is it not?" (p. 5). He answered the question in the negative, and suggested another method of initiation into Judaism, viz. a solemn declaration by the father in an assembly of ten Israelites, that he desired to have the child received into the covenant made by God with Abraham and Moses.

future this bureau promulgated a measure placing the circumcision of Jewish children under the direct supervision of the sanitary office; the third paragraph of this measure ordered that "Israelitish citizens and inhabitants, in as far as they desire to have their children circumcised (*sofern sie ihre Kinder beschneiden lassen wollen*), may employ only persons especially appointed to perform the rite of circumcision." Members of the Reform Society and others who sympathized with them interpreted these words to mean that the rite of circumcision was to be performed or omitted at the desire of the father. It was not long before the actual occurrence took place that made the matter a living issue. The question as to whether circumcision was a *conditio sine qua non* of entrance into Judaism had been discussed at the meetings of the Reform Society; it had become known that Riesser had urged that the society should institute active propaganda for the abolition of the rite; the final determination of the society not to include the circumcision paragraph in its Declaration had been one of the chief reasons why he had refused to be identified with it¹. Although it is true that at the time the agitation broke forth the society had not made any public official declaration *pro* or *con* the sentiments of its members were well known, and it became identified in the public mind with the anti-circumcision agitation. The aged rabbi of Frankfort, Solomon Abraham Trier, believing that one of the very fundamentals of Judaism had been wantonly disregarded by the individuals who had neglected to have their children circumcised, addressed the Senate on February 26, 1843, calling the attention of the law-making body to the importance of circumcision from the religious standpoint, and pointing out the dangers that would threaten the integrity of the Jewish community were the performance or omission of this rite to be left to the caprice of the individual father; he therefore requested the Senate to issue a de-

¹ Isler, *Gabriel Riesser's Leben, nebst Mittheilungen aus seinen Briefen*, I, 360.

finite declaration that should counteract the effect of that phrase in the regulation of the sanitary bureau, which had been seized upon by the opponents of circumcision, as a justification of their position, the phrase, namely, "in as far as they desire to have their children circumcised." The Senate answered him on March 10 by saying that it was not the intention of the regulation in question to abolish a religious ordinance of the Jews. This, however, was not definite enough, and the agitation continued unabated. The danger of calling in the aid of the State to decide upon the private concerns of a religious community, was pointed out by clear thinkers, but the old rabbi and his party felt that the very existence of Judaism was imperilled, and hence considered any and every step justified, even the employment of force through the legislative arm. On August 4 Trier again appealed to the Senate, requesting that it declare that no child of Jewish parents could be received into the congregation as a co-religionist unless he had been circumcised; he made similar representations on September 15 and October 31; the Senate took action in the matter on February 13, 1844, by expressing its regret that certain members of the Jewish community gave cause for complaint to their co-religionists, and by stating its inability to take the step suggested by Trier¹.

This was a distinct defeat for the rabbinical party, and its ill-advised move to secure the support of the civil power against the nonconformists. It has been shown in a previous article² how frequently this was done in those days; certainly nothing is more harmful to the true interests of religion than the use of force through the instrumentality of the government, to ensure the fulfilment of its behests and commands³.

¹ *Israelit des neunz. Jahrh.*, V, 69, 74, 84.

² *J. Q. R.*, XV, 501.

³ For an excellent account of the numerous attempts to enlist the aid of the government against the reformers see Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliten*, X, part iii, 225-34.

Trier did not confine his activity to these attempts to secure governmental interference. He addressed also a communication to the rabbis of Europe asking for their opinions upon the Reform Society, and upon the significance of circumcision. His communication appeared as the introduction to the volume, *Rabbinical Responses on Circumcision*¹. He speaks of the Reform Society as schismatic, and as masquerading under the deceptive guise of reform, but as being in reality the opponent of positive Judaism; he denounces it as a new sect² standing outside the pale of Judaism³; he pleads for the preservation of positive Judaism which is exposed to the devastating hurricane of a misunderstood spirit of the age⁴; he asks for an opinion on the new sect, and invites suggestions as to what measures should be taken against such as refuse to have their sons circumcised through frivolity and unbelief. The communication was sent to eighty rabbis; forty-one responses were received, and twenty-eight were printed in the volume designated; these were from the rabbis Samson Raphael Hirsch of Emden, Nathan Marcus Adler of Hanover, Felsenstein of Hanau, Lazar Horwitz of Vienna, Jacob Aaron Ettlinger of Altona, S. Ullmann of Crefeld, M. Wetzlar of Gudensberg, Adler of Oberndorf, Samuel Hirsch of Luxembourg, Seligmann Bär Bamberger of Würzburg, A. Wechsler of Schwabach, H. Aub of Munich, S. D. Luzzatto of Padua, I. N. Mannheimer of Vienna, L. Adler of Kissingen, S. L. Rapoport of Prague, A. A. Wolff of Copenhagen, B. H. Auerbach of Darmstadt, Levy of Giessen, J. Bamberger of Worms, A. Sutro of Münster, J. Löwenstein of Gailingen, S. Fürst of Heidelberg, H. Traub of Mannheim, Wassermann of Mühlingen, L. Schott of Randegg, J. Mecklenburg of Königsberg, and H. Schwarz of Hürben. All of these responses took strong ground in favour of circumcision; in fact it was stated that all the responses which had been

¹ *Rabbinische Gutachten über die Beschneidung, gesammelt und herausgegeben von Salomon Abraham Trier, Frankfurt am Main, 1844.*

² *ibid.* IX.

³ *ibid.* XIII.

⁴ *ibid.* VI.

received were uncompromisingly and unreservedly opposed to the Reform Society and its position. This was not quite in accordance with the facts in the case, for the response of Rabbi Elias Grünebaum was suppressed because of the difference of his views with those of the rabbi of Frankfort¹. Zunz also wrote a response which was, however, not included in the volume, but was published separately². In this the great scholar took positive ground against the abolition of the rite; he warns against heresy trials and ecclesiastical penalties; he urges that the father, who fails to have his son circumcised, continue to be recognized as a Jew; he would not have the synagogue closed to him nor give him pain, although he give pain to others. But circumcision is of the very essence of Judaism. It is not a ceremony but an institution; not the act of circumcising but the being circumcised is the kernel of the command. Other acts take place frequently in life; if neglected they can be atoned for and performed. In this case, however, a single omission is decisive, and the son who has not been circumcised by his father because of principle, will scarcely remain within Judaism for principle's sake.

It is not necessary to quote very extensively from the opinions contained in the volume published by Trier. Men of all shades of thought are represented in the volume; Samuel Hirsch the reformer, Isaac Noa Mannheimer the conservative, and Jacob Aaron Ettlinger the ultra-orthodox clasp hands in agreement upon the question at issue, although their reasons may not be the same. The twenty-eight responses present a practical unanimity of opinion to the effect that an Israelite who denies the obligatory character of the command to circumcise, and neglects to

¹ This response was published in the *Israelit des neunz. Jahrh.*, V, 121-5, 129-32, with an editorial footnote that it had been suppressed by the committee that had the publication of the responses in charge; see explanatory statement of the committee, *ibid.* 176-7.

² The response has been included in the edition of his collected writings, see *Gesammelte Schriften von Dr. Zunz*, II, 191-203, Berlin, 1876.

have his son circumcised on the ground that he does not consider it essential to Judaism, is to be considered a denier of the divine law, and a destroyer of the eternal covenant. S. R. Hirsch stated that by such declarations and acts, they (the members of the Reform Society) have cut themselves loose from Judaism, and the rabbi of the community to which they belong must treat them as no longer members of his community; they are apostates (*mumrim*)¹.

The response of N. M. Adler, rabbi in Hanover, is of interest because of his election shortly thereafter as chief rabbi of Great Britain. Adler considers the question from three standpoints, the Biblical, the historical, and the religio-philosophical; he shows that although commentators and philosophers may have differed widely as to the significance of circumcision, this one explaining it as a symbol of purification, that one as a sign of priestly selection, this one giving it a social, that one an ethical, and a third a sanitary interpretation, yet all agreed as to its being an absolute requirement for the Jew; he therefore concludes that the one who disregards the command is an apostate, and incurs all the sad consequences which the law ordains in the case of apostates; all association with him must cease²; he must be looked upon as excluded from the congregation of Israel³.

The renowned scholar, S. D. Luzzatto of Padua, declared that the members of the society are heretics and deniers of the Mosaic Law, and that according to their own confession they stand without the pale of the Jewish religion. His response, however, evinces a beautiful spirit; although positive in his attitude of unfailing opposition to the Reform Society, and although he opines that no congregational office or honour should be bestowed on its members, or any gift or offering be received from them, yet he recommends leniency, and counsels that words of truth and peace be addressed to them; possibly thereby they

¹ *Rabbinische Gutachten über die Beschneidung*, 4.

² *ibid.* 13.

³ *ibid.* 14.

will be induced to renounce their error and return to the right path¹.

The Viennese preacher, I. N. Mannheimer, disputes the right of the few to break away from the great community ; Judaism is a historical system ; it rests not on philosophy ; it is life, it is experience ; it is made up of a thousand forces, and any violent action such as this of the Reform Society is treason to the spirit of Judaism. He apostrophizes the Reform Society thus : "Cut yourselves loose from us ! you have nothing in common with us ! You speak of the force which we apply to you and to your conscience ; and do you expect us to submit humbly to your capricious procedure ; do you expect for one instant that we shall or can permit that each and every one shall obey or disregard the commands of our religion according to individual whim or caprice, that any and every insignificant or irresponsible person shall arise and contemptuously disregard Talmud and commentators to-day, and Moses and the prophets to-morrow ?"² Further along he asserts that the refusal to have a child circumcised is equivalent to a renunciation of the covenant of God³ ; he declares also that should such a case occur in his congregation, he would not admit the boy to any Jewish function, would not register him as a Jew, would not confirm nor marry him, nor permit him to be buried in a Jewish cemetery ; in Austria no Jewish child is registered unless circumcised⁴.

Finally the opinion of S. L. Rapoport, the celebrated scholar and rabbi of Prague, may be cited ; he presents the argument from history, saying, that from the time of Abraham none have questioned the fact that circumcision is a necessary condition for entrance into Judaism ; he indulges in the strongest terms of condemnation of the members of the Reform Society, speaking of them as "that frivolous company, which denies the fundamental principles of our religion, and confesses publicly that it does not

¹ *Rabbinische Gutachten über die Beschneidung*, 77.

² *ibid.* 99, 100.

³ *ibid.* 101.

⁴ *ibid.* 102.

accept our traditions¹”; “those reformers have no definite standpoint in Judaism; their only purpose is to break down all the preventive measures which the divine law has set up against human passions²”; “we must exercise the greatest care and warn our co-religionists most earnestly to have no association of any kind with the members of this Reform Society, particularly not to form any matrimonial alliances with them³.” I refrain from quoting any further from these opinions, since the extracts which have been given indicate the sentiment that runs throughout the volume; as already mentioned, each and every one represented in this collection argued strongly and often passionately in favour of circumcision as an absolute requirement for the Jew; it is but just, however, that the other side also be given a hearing, and I therefore feel it necessary to introduce the opinions of the two leading reformers of the time, Geiger and Holdheim. Although Geiger was quite as opposed to the course pursued by the Reform Society, as were the strict traditionalists⁴, still he sympathized with them in their opposition to circumcision; in a letter to Zunz, written March 19, 1845, he says in discussing Zunz’s⁵ opinion on circumcision: “I was not in sympathy with the Reform Society; it had no clear idea of what it was striving for, neither was it honest enough in its utterances; instead of proceeding calmly and sanely, it aroused the greatest antagonism by attacking at once the rite of circumcision, which was considered a very fundamental of Judaism. . . . As for myself, I must confess

¹ *Rabbinische Gutachten über die Beschneidung*, 26.

² *ibid.* 137.

³ *ibid.* 140. See also his article, “Die Epoche des Maccabäer-Kampfes und die heutige Zeit—Eine Parallele,” in *Zeitschrift für die religiösen Interessen des Judenthums*, I (1844), 117.

⁴ See his letters of Aug. 25, 1843, and June 11, 1844, to M. A. Stern, *Nachgelassene Schriften*, V, 167 ff., 173 ff.

⁵ Zunz had written in his response: “God forbid that we should tamper with this precept, which was in past times, and is still at the present day, revered as sacred by the whole Jewish people. Who will dare abrogate with impunity this holy rite?”

that I cannot comprehend the necessity of working up a spirit of enthusiasm for the ceremony merely on the ground that it is held in general esteem. It remains a barbarous bloody act . . . ; the sacrificial idea which invested the act with sanctity in former days has no significance for us. However tenaciously religious sentiment may have clung to it formerly, at present its only supports are habit and fear, to which we certainly do not wish to erect any shrines¹." Geiger, however, did not express himself publicly in this wise; this was written in a private communication. Holdheim, on the other hand, issued a pamphlet entitled *Circumcision, Viewed Religiously and Dogmatically*²; he considers the subject at length from three points: (1) is circumcision so important a condition in Judaism that the uncircumcised individual who has been born of Jewish parents is not to be considered a Jew? (2) is the father who neglects to have his son circumcised still to be considered a Jew? (3) what is to be the attitude of the Jewish religious authoritative body if circumcision is neglected? may it resort to force—in such cases as it has the power to do so—to compel a father to have the ceremony performed, or in case it has not the power, may it call in the aid of the civil authorities³? The third question he answered with a

¹ *Nachgelassene Schriften*, V, 182-3.

² *Ueber die Beschneidung in religiös-dogmatischer Beziehung*, Schwerin and Berlin, 1844.

³ The consideration of this third point was undoubtedly inspired by the utterances of Zacharias Frankel, the exponent of "positive-historical Judaism," in his magazine *Zeitschrift für die religiösen Interessen des Judenthums*, I, 60 ff. Frankel argued that if the father neglected to have his child circumcised the duty devolved upon the religious authoritative body. It is only through circumcision that the born Israelite receives the real sanctification. True, by the very fact of his birth he is included in the congregation, but he does not become a full member thereof till he is circumcised. Therefore the act is to be considered partly in the light of a sacrament. In Judaism even more than in Christianity the sacramental reception of the child devolves upon the spiritual representatives of the community as a duty. For in Christianity the child is entirely without the fold until baptized, while in Judaism it is partly

decisive negative; the individual's freedom of conscience may not be tampered with by the application of force; the religious leaders in Judaism may exercise only the task and the right to teach. In regard to the first two points, he contended that circumcision was a sign and condition of the theocratic-national, but not of the religio-universalistic covenant in Judaism; not circumcision then makes the Jew, but birth; circumcision is not an all-essential requirement in Judaism, therefore both the father who neglected to circumcise his son, and the son who was not circumcised, are to be considered Jews¹.

within owing to its birth. The religious authoritative body is not to punish the father, but to protect the child, and should call in the aid of the civil power, which is justified in interfering in such cases as threaten to disrupt Judaism.

¹ It will not be out of place to refer in this connexion to a most interesting case that occurred a few years later. In 1847 a Mr. Hirsch, of Teterow, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, neglected to have his newly-born son circumcised; he expressed the desire, however, to rear the child in the Jewish faith, and insisted that it be entered in the registry of Jewish births and receive its name in the synagogue in accordance with the custom then existing in Mecklenburg. The teacher, Salinger, who officiated in the community, did not know how to proceed in this exceptional case; he applied to the Jewish directorate for guidance; this in its turn referred the case to Dr. David Einhorn, the chief rabbi of the province, for decision. Einhorn authorized the teacher to name the child in the synagogue, and showed that even from the Talmudical standpoint the uncircumcised Jew is not to be excluded from the Jewish community if he has not wilfully declared his purpose to cut himself loose; this is not the case in the present instance, for the father has declared expressly his desire to rear the child as a Jew, and certainly the innocent child is not to be excluded from the community for no fault of its own. He closes his letter of instructions in the following lofty strain: "May God bless the child, and adorn it with the virtues of an Israelite indeed, an Israelite of circumcised heart, and may all those who think that the integrity of our divine religion, which our forefathers sealed with their noble blood a thousand times as a covenant between God and Israel and all mankind, is threatened by such occurrences, and are therefore sorely troubled, derive consolation from the thought that the divine by its very nature is imperishable, and that Judaism rests on the indestructible pillars of right, truth, and peace, which will not totter even though the earth wax old like a garment and the heavens vanish like smoke." The child was named in the

The result of all this agitation was to leave the question, as to the necessity of circumcision as a *conditio sine qua non* of Judaism, much the same as it had been before. With the fewest exceptions, the authoritative voices had expressed themselves strongly in the affirmative. Holdheim and Hess stood alone among the theologians in their radical views on the subject; Geiger apparently agreed with them, but he did not give utterance to his views otherwise than in private correspondence. Practically the ceremony continued to be, and still is, almost universally observed; the rabbinical conference that met in Breslau in 1846 made a number of declarations of a practical bearing, but uttered no decisive opinion on the cardinal point of the essentiality or non-essentiality of the ceremony; at the meeting of the Central Conference of American Rabbis held in the city of New York in 1892, the majority of the members present voted that circumcision was not necessary in the case of proselytes to Judaism. There are many Jews to-day who feel as did the Frankfort reformers of 1843, that circumcision is a relic of barbarism, and should make way for some other method of initiation into Judaism, more in consonance with the universalistic interpretation of the faith. It is to be hoped that some representative rabbinical organization of the reform school, like the Central Conference of American Rabbis, will take up this question in the near future, and after considering it from all sides, make some positive declaration in accordance with the standpoint of reformed Judaism.

All things considered, the outcome of this whole agitation was a gain for the progressive movement. Although the extremists who had called the Reform Society into being did not meet with much sympathy, yet on the other hand it had become apparent that the days of usefulness of extremists at the other end of the scale, like Trier, were over, and that the community of Frankfort required a rabbi

synagogue on Sabbath Channukah. See *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, 1849, 583; Einhorn, *Sinai*, II, 736-7, Baltimore, 1857.

of the new school. Events had been moving towards this end for some years, but it was not till 1844 that it was consummated. In March of that year, Leopold Stein, rabbi of Burgkunstadt in Bavaria, was elected as associate rabbi to Trier. This choice of the directorate was extremely displeasing to the old rabbi, and, had the circumstances and the year been the same, there would have been undoubtedly a repetition of the Geiger-Tiktin affair¹; but even during the short space of six years great changes had taken place in the religious atmosphere enveloping Jewry, and the strenuous experience of Geiger was not repeated. Still Trier did not accept the inevitable without a struggle; a few weeks after the election of Stein he refused to deliver his semi-annual *derashah* on the Great Sabbath²; he had protested to the Senate of the city against the election of Stein; the Senate referred him to the directorate of the congregation as having jurisdiction in the premises. Trier resigned as rabbi in May.

Stein, who styled himself an adherent of the progressive rabbinical party, at once began reforming the service; as early as July, 1844, he introduced sixteen liturgical reforms; among them may be mentioned the change of the benediction *שְׁעֵשֶׁנִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל* to *שְׁלָא עֲשֵׂנִי גֵר*; the elimination of the benediction *שְׁלָא עֲשֵׂנִי אִשָּׁה*; the substitution of an appropriate German prayer for the *יְקוֹם פּוֹרֶקֶן* and the *מִי שְׁבָרָךְ*; and the substitution of German songs for the *לְבָה דְּרוּי* and the *לְבוּ נִרְנָנָה*; the introduction of the German sermon; and the singing of German hymns before and after the sermon.

¹ *J. Q. R.*, XVI, 44 ff.

² Before the inception of the reform movement it had been customary for the rabbi to preach but twice or possibly three times a year, viz. on the Great Sabbath (i. e. the Sabbath immediately preceding the Feast of Passover) and on the Sabbath of Repentance (i. e. the Sabbath of the ten days between the New Year's Day and the Day of Atonement); these *derashoth* were not sermons in the homiletic sense, but were *halakhic* in character, being explanations of the laws to be observed in connexion with the holidays. The third annual sermon was preached occasionally on the Eve of Atonement. See *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Art. "Homiletics."

The activity of Stein in the reform cause, although by no means satisfactory to the members of, and sympathizers with, the Reform Society, for whom he did not go far enough, still had the effect of taking the wind out of their sails. The communal congregation having placed at its head a rabbi of the new school, it was felt generally that there was no need for a special reform society or congregation. In truth the Reform Society as an organization disappeared from the public communal life; it was heard from but twice again; once when it declared that the time had come for Sunday services to be introduced and appointed a committee of five to look for a suitable preacher, and to request the congregation to grant the use of the *Andachtssaal* for this purpose¹, and again when, in June, 1845, it issued a circular letter, in which it expresses gratification at the progress of reform ideas; after calling attention to what was done at the Brunswick rabbinical conference², it calls upon every Israelite to support the rabbis who are leading the hosts onward. It welcomes the formation of the Reform Association of Berlin³. It suggests a meeting of reformers from all over Germany in the fall of 1845, for the discussion of ways and means of uniting the various reform tendencies among German Jews. The letter ends with the words "let us remain united, firm and loyal, and the success of our efforts will discomfit the false zealots, will put to shame the selfish indifferentists, and Judaism will become the bond that unites us without separating us from our century, our fatherland and mankind⁴." These words may be considered the valedictory of the Frankfort Society; considering that it had never in reality passed beyond the formative stage, the prominent rôle that it played during two eventful years is remarkable; that it gave a great impulse

¹ *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, IX, 709.

² This conference met June 12-19, 1844; it will form the subject of a subsequent chapter in this study.

³ *Die Genossenschaft für Reform im Judenthume*, organized May 8, 1845.

⁴ *Israelit des neunzehnten Jahrh.*, VI, 209-10.

to the progressive movement, not only in Frankfort, but throughout Germany, cannot be gainsaid; nor can it be denied, on the other hand, that its members, pursuing the method they did, showed that they did not have the correct understanding of the development of Judaism. The extreme individualism and the animus against theologians and rabbis, at once stamped the Society as partisan beyond measure, but more than all else the absolute inadequacy of its platform proved that its founders were not competent leaders in that stormy period of Jewish life. It represents, however, a groping for the light, and although it failed signally in the work it set out to do, still will it remain in Jewish annals as one of the most interesting episodes of a most stirring epoch. It had panegyrists and detractors¹; it aroused bitter passions. These things have passed. Looking back from the vantage-ground of sixty years after, we recognize that the Reform Society of Frankfort represented the extreme left of the hosts marching under the reform banner; in some respects it had separated from the main army, but with it all, its members desired to remain within Judaism, and we may write as its epitaph the closing words of its last public utterance, that its aim was to make "Judaism the bond which unites us without separating us from our century, our fatherland, and mankind."

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¹ In addition to the articles and pamphlets referred to in the course of this chapter, the following may be mentioned as having been inspired by the Reform Society:—*Das moderne Judenthum, die Frankfurter Reformfreunde und die Neue Zeit*, von Albert Fränkel, Reutlingen, 1844. *Die Rabbinerversammlung und der Reformverein; letzte Auflösung der Judenfrage*, von Dr. W. B. Fränkel (an anti-Semitic screed by an apostate), Elberfeld, 1844. *An die israelitischen Reformfreunde in Frankfurt a. M.*, an anonymous poem by a Christian lady, *Israelit des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, IV, 214. *Ueber den jüdischen Reformverein in Frankfurt*, von Prof. Dr. Nesselmann, *ibid.*, V, 32. *Zur Kritik der Beschneidungsfrage im Reformverein* von Dr. J. Bergson, *Literaturblatt des Israelit des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 1847, nos. 44, 45, 46, 47.